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Chairman: Mr. Effah-Apenteng ..... (Ghana)
Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. Mselle

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Programme budget implications of draft resolution A/C.3/56/L.26: Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

Programme budget implications of draft resolution A/56/L.7: Special session of the General Assembly on children

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 12: Report of the Economic and Social Council (A/56/3 (chaps. I, VII (sections B and C) and IX))

1. **The Chairman** invited the Committee to consider chapters I, VII (sections B and C) and IX of the report of the Economic and Social Council for 2001 (A/56/3), which had been allocated to the Fifth Committee.

2. He said that he took it that the Committee wished to recommend to the General Assembly that it should take note of those chapters.

3. *It was so decided.*

Agenda item 122: Programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001 (*continued*)

Agenda item 123: Proposed programme budget for the biennium 2002-2003 (*continued*)

Administrative expenses of the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund (A/56/7/Add.1 and A/56/289)

4. **Mr. Larivière** (Chairman of the Standing Committee of the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Board), introducing the report of the Standing Committee on the administrative expenses of the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund (A/56/289), drew attention to paragraphs 1 to 18, which set out the arrangements for the report's submission to the General Assembly and contained information on the Fund's administrative and financial operations. There were currently 19 member organizations in the Fund and more than 122,500 active participants and beneficiaries. Over the past 10 years, the number of beneficiaries had increased at an average rate of about 4.5 per cent per annum. Total benefit payments exceeded $1 billion per annum. The market value of the assets of the Fund, which had reached a record high of $26.3 billion on 27 March 2000, currently stood at about $22 billion.

5. As indicated in paragraph 4 of the report, the administrative expenses of the Fund were separated into three components: administrative costs, investment costs and audit costs. The expenses borne by the Fund and those charged to the United Nations, under the cost-sharing arrangements approved by the General Assembly, were described in paragraphs 6 to 18.

6. The Standing Committee had approved for submission to the General Assembly revised budget estimates for the biennium 2000-2001 amounting to $59,202,200; that represented a net saving of slightly over $3 million compared with the estimates approved in 2000, savings of $3,694,900 realized under investment costs, having been partially offset by additional resource requirements, in the amount of $596,000, relating to administrative costs for phase I of the Fund's re-engineering project. The savings were largely attributable to the fact that the fees for the custodian and master record keeper had been negotiated after the biennial budget for 2000-2001 had been approved. The initial appropriations had provided for fees based on the market value of the assets and on the volume of the transactions, which were all variable, whereas the fees that had eventually been negotiated were based on flat dollar amounts.

7. The budget estimates for the biennium 2002-2003 were summarized in paragraphs 34 to 45 of the report and followed, to the extent possible, the United Nations budget presentation format. There had been an extensive exchange of views on the budget proposal among the three constituent groups of the Standing Committee, which had led to the establishment of an in-session Working Group. The consensus conclusions reached by the Working Group, which had been accepted by the Standing Committee, were set out in paragraph 26 of annex IV to the report. The Working Group had, inter alia, expressed its full support for the Chief Executive Officer/Secretary in his overall plans for modernization and his focus on expected results and performance indicators; deferred its recommendations on all requested reclassifications pending a whole office review of the staffing structure and levels of both the Fund secretariat and the Investment Management Service; approved the staffing requests for Geneva and New York; expressed support for the Fund's re-engineering projects; recommended deferral of the resources requested for an additional P-5 post in the Investment Management Service; and endorsed the Chief Executive Officer/Secretary's proposals regarding office accommodations, suggesting that he look into the possibility of acquiring premises outside the United Nations for the Fund secretariat.

8. The proposed administrative expenses chargeable to the Fund for the biennium 2002-2003, if approved

by the General Assembly, would amount to $74,322,400, consisting of administrative costs of $29,943,800, investment costs of $43,405,100 and audit costs of $973,500. A detailed breakdown by programme and activity of the budget estimates for the biennium 2002-2003 was contained in annex II to the report.

9. Regarding the related report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) (A/56/7/Add.1), he said that he had taken note of the Advisory Committee's observations on the presentation of the budget document and its request that efforts should be made to streamline future reports. He had noted, with particular satisfaction, the Advisory Committee's warning against artificially constructing a results-based budget for the Fund merely to comply with the format of the United Nations programme budget and its call for the selection of data that was relevant and specific to the Fund's operations and requirements.

10. He expressed regret that the Advisory Committee had recommended that the eight additional posts requested for 2002-2003 for the Fund's Information Management Systems Section, specifically for the re-engineering project, should be established on a temporary basis. The Advisory Committee had perhaps not given adequate consideration to the difficulties of recruiting expert staff on a temporary basis, particularly in the area of information technology.

11. Lastly, he expressed the hope that the Fifth Committee would concur with the recommendation of ACABQ in paragraph 31 of its report that the revised estimates for the biennium 2000-2001 and the proposed appropriation for the biennium 2002-2003 should be approved for the administrative expenses of the Fund, as submitted by the Standing Committee, and that the latter should be authorized to supplement the voluntary contributions to the Emergency Fund by an amount not exceeding $200,000 for the biennium 2002-2003.

12. **Mr. Mselle** (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions), introducing the related report of ACABQ (A/56/7/Add.1), drew attention to the recommendation contained in paragraph 31. Regarding the eight additional posts requested for the re-engineering project, he said that the Advisory Committee questioned the Fund's approach. In paragraph 23 of its report, it suggested that the most appropriate course to follow would be to dedicate a certain level of staff resources to the project and, once the project was completed, to decide which of the posts would be retained on a permanent basis as established posts. It proposed that, at the current stage, the eight posts should be established on a temporary basis. He did not believe that the contractual arrangements for the staff concerned would be problematic. The Advisory Committee had, in the past, made a number of recommendations for the adoption of a flexible approach to the recruitment of expert staff in the area of information technology. He failed to see why the Fund secretariat could not take a similar approach to the eight additional posts requested. If the Fund ultimately concluded that those posts were required on a permanent basis, it could make a proposal to that effect. Regarding the presentation of the budget document, he emphasized that future reports should be streamlined and transparent and that the elements contained therein should be in keeping with the Fund's requirements.

13. **Mr. Repasch** (United States of America) noted the impressive growth in the size and scope of the Fund's operations and in the market value of its assets. Given the Advisory Committee's observation, in paragraph 28 of its report, that it was not convinced that the increase in the provisions for travel was fully warranted and its belief that some economies might be possible, he wondered why it recommended, in paragraph 31, that the proposed appropriation for the biennium 2002-2003 should be approved for the administrative expenses of the Fund, as submitted by the Standing Committee.

14. **Mr. Mselle** (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that the Advisory Committee often called for economies with regard to particular provisions without recommending a reduction in the overall level of resources proposed, since it was often not practicable for the Committee to identify a specific amount that could be saved. It would be for the Fund secretariat to administer the provisions for travel in the light of the Advisory Committee's observations and recommendations if the latter were approved by the General Assembly. Any saving from the approach taken by the Fund secretariat would be reflected in the budget performance report.

Agenda item 123: Proposed programme budget for the biennium 2002-2003 (*continued*)

Request for a subvention to the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research resulting from the recommendations of the Board of Trustees of the Institute on the work programme of the Institute for 2002 (A/56/511; A/C.5/56/2)

15. **The Chairman** drew attention to the note by the Secretary-General on the request for a subvention to the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) resulting from the recommendations of the Board of Trustees of the Institute on the work programme of the Institute for 2002 (A/C.5/56/2).

16. **Mr. Mselle** (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions), introducing the related report of ACABQ (A/56/511), said that a provision of $213,000 per annum for the Institute had been included in the programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001 and that it was proposed that the subvention should be maintained at the same level for the period 2002-2003. The Advisory Committee recommended acceptance of the proposal. He noted that, while the amount included in programme budgets was for two years, the statute of the Institute required that an annual subvention should be approved by the General Assembly on the basis of a request by the Board of Trustees of the Institute. There had been some discussion as to the adequacy of the subvention. The Advisory Committee's view, as indicated in paragraph 5 of its report, was that any change in the level of the subvention should be proposed in accordance with the relevant articles of the statute of the Institute.

17. **Mr. Repasch** (United States of America) said that his delegation endorsed the objectives of the Institute and looked forward to its continuing success. The request for a subvention was an annual ritual. While the United States had supported the activities of the Institute through voluntary contributions, his delegation did not consider subventions from the regular budget to be an appropriate means of funding those activities. He also wondered whether, in the light of the improved financial situation of the Institute, there continued to be a need for a subvention. Subventions were only appropriate in the first few years of an organization's life, if at all, whereas the subvention to UNIDIR seemed to have become embedded in the budget. His delegation therefore urged the Committee not to approve the request.

18. **Ms. Rødsmoen** (Norway) said that Norway strongly supported the work of UNIDIR and had been one of the largest contributors of voluntary funds to the Institute. Her delegation called on the Committee to approve the request for a subvention in line with the Advisory Committee's recommendation. No additional budgetary appropriation would be required, the amount of the subvention having remained unchanged for several years.

19. **Mr. Herrera** (Mexico) said that his delegation endorsed the comments just made by the representative of Norway. The work of UNIDIR was extremely important. The Committee should proceed as in the past and approve the request for a subvention.

20. **Mr. Fox** (Australia) said that his delegation also fully supported the work of the Institute. However, it questioned whether the subvention should be granted on an annual basis and wished to pursue the matter further in informal consultations.

21. **Mr. Chandra** (India) said that India had long supported the work of the Institute and would continue to do so. Given that the amount of the subvention was the same as in the period 1996-1997, it was not clear to him why it now covered the costs of only one and a half posts, whereas, in the past, it had covered three posts.

22. **Mr. Mselle** (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that, while the amount of the annual subvention had remained the same, its value, in terms of what it was able to fund, had declined. That was why some had proposed that the amount of the subvention should be increased.

Revised estimates resulting from resolutions and decisions adopted by the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session of 2001 (A/56/518; A/C.5/56/4)

23. **Mr. Mirmohammad** (Islamic Republic of Iran), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, supported the programme of work of the United Nations Forum on Forests and the resources that had been proposed for it. The Group of 77 and China would welcome the views of the Director of the Programme Planning and Budget Division on the impact of the

opinion contained in paragraph 9 of the Advisory Committee's report (A/56/518) that the current arrangements for financing accommodations for the secretariat of the United Nations Forum on Forests should continue in the biennium 2002-2003 and that such additional requirements as might arise should be indicated in the performance reports for 2002-2003.

24. **Mr. Sach** (Director of the Programme Planning and Budget Division) said that, as a result of the shortage of available office accommodation at Headquarters, requests for the approval of new posts were usually accompanied by an associated request for the rental of office space. Accommodation had already been identified at Headquarters, however, and it would therefore be possible to accommodate the new staff within existing space. If that were not the case, it would be reported in the first performance report for the programme budget for the biennium 2002-2003.

Programme budget implications of draft resolution A/C.1/56/L.47: The illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects
(A/56/644; A/C.5/56/13)

25. **Mr. Mselle** (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions), introducing the Advisory Committee's report on the programme budget implications of draft resolution A/C.1/56/L.47 (A/56/644), recalled that the two new posts (one P-4 and one General Service) had been requested in the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2002-2003. In its first report on the proposed programme budget (A/56/7), the Advisory Committee had indicated that, on the basis of the information provided on the programme of work, it was not convinced of the need to establish the two posts at that stage. However, in view of the information contained in the statement submitted by the Secretary-General (A/C.5/56/13), the Advisory Committee had no objection to the establishment of the two new posts. It recommended that the Fifth Committee should inform the General Assembly that, should it adopt draft resolution A/C.1/56/L.47, expenditure up to $559,800 would be required for the biennium 2002-2003 and that additional appropriation would be considered under the procedures established by the General Assembly in its resolutions 41/213 and 42/211 for the use and operation of the contingency fund.

26. **Mr. Repasch** (United States of America) asked why the Secretariat had not implemented the language of the draft resolution, which explicitly stated that the activities in question should be carried out from "within existing resources".

27. **Mr. Zhou** Qiangwu (China) supported the proposal for the establishment of the new posts to help ensure the implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and endorsed the recommendation contained in paragraph 10 of the Advisory Committee's report (A/56/644).

28. **Mr. Orr** (Canada) said that the appropriation being sought under section 27 D (Office of Central Support Services) for common service costs required further explanation. He would be very surprised if the amount of $59,900 was being sought for office accommodation for two staff members. His delegation noted from paragraph 2 of document A/C.5/56/13 that the Secretary-General had been requested to ensure that resources and expertise were made available to the Secretariat to promote the implementation of the Programme of Action, but that no resources had been requested for the activities of the Department of Public Information in that connection. It was not clear whether that Department had expressed its readiness to carry out the activities requested without additional allocations.

29. **Ms. Silot Bravo** (Cuba) said that the Secretary-General's proposal to charge the additional appropriations against the contingency fund was rather odd. According to rule 153 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, it was for the Fifth Committee to decide on the sources from which proposed activities were to be financed.

30. **Mr. Herrera** (Mexico) said that his delegation supported the recommendations contained in the report of the Advisory Committee.

31. **Mr. Albrecht** (South Africa) said that the draft resolution was of particular relevance to African States, which were directly affected by the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. He noted the Secretary-General's statement that it was not possible at the current stage to identify activities within section 4 of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2002-2003 that could be terminated, deferred, curtailed or modified during the biennium and agreed with the proposal that the additional provision should represent a charge against the contingency fund.

32. **Mr. Sach** (Director of the Programme Planning and Budget Division) said, with reference to the use of the wording "within existing resources" in the draft resolution, that it was not appropriate for draft resolutions emanating from other Main Committees to provide for the methods by which proposed activities should be funded. That was for the Fifth Committee to recommend to the General Assembly. The Secretary-General would then determine whether it was possible to implement the proposed activity from within existing resources.

33. No provision had been made under the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2002-2003 in relation to the Programme of Action. At the current stage, notwithstanding the use of the wording "within existing resources" in the draft resolution, those requirements could not be absorbed within the existing resources under section 4 (Disarmament) of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2002-2003. In paragraph 7 of its report (A/56/644), the Advisory Committee had recognized the position which the Secretary-General had taken on the matter. Clearly, if the proposals could be implemented within existing resources, that would be done. To avoid disappointment in the future, however, it was necessary to indicate from the outset when it would not be possible to stay within existing resources. He wished to add that the additional requirements of $559,800 were not only for office space but also for telephones, furniture and fixtures and computer connections. Costs had been calculated on a standard basis.

34. **Mr. Repasch** (United States of America) said that, while he had noted the reply of the Director of the Programme Planning and Budget Division to his earlier question, he still failed to understand why the request to carry out an activity from within existing resources was not being given the weight it deserved as an integral part of the General Assembly's mandate. His delegation would return to the issue at a later stage.

35. **Mr. Orr** (Canada) said he was shocked that the cost of accommodating two additional staff members should be nearly $60,000. He would draw the Committee's attention in that regard to the comments of the Joint Inspection Unit about the irrational allocation of space within the Secretariat.

36. **Mr. Tilemans** (Belgium), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said that it was the urgent request of the Union that consideration of the statements of programme budget implications should not be taken up in informal consultations until all of them were in hand and available for consideration.

37. **Mr. Mselle** (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that there were two ways for the Committee to proceed with the statements of programme budget implications. The procedure followed by the Fifth Committee in the past had been not to delay action by the General Assembly on the work of its Main Committees. The Fifth Committee therefore informed the General Assembly that, if it were to adopt a draft resolution, the programme budget implications would potentially amount to a certain level. The actual appropriation would then be considered by the General Assembly in the light of a consolidated statement prepared by the Secretary-General, which would go first to the Fifth Committee and then to the General Assembly in the context of the Fifth Committee's report on the proposed programme budget itself. That procedure allowed the General Assembly to approve the reports of the Main Committees but to defer approval of the ultimate level of resources to be appropriated.

38. If the Fifth Committee were to consider all the statements together, the President of the General Assembly would have to be consulted regarding the timing of the Assembly's review of the various reports from the Main Committees. A number of Committees had already concluded their work and it might not be appropriate for the Fifth Committee to appear to be delaying acceptance by the General Assembly of the reports of the other Main Committees.

39. **Mr. Tilemans** (Belgium), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said that he had a firm mandate from the group on whose behalf he spoke. The Fifth Committee, which had sometimes been put in embarrassing situations by other Main Committees, must take seriously its responsibilities under rule 153 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly. All the statements of programme budget implications should be available before informal consultations could take place on them. In their absence, the European Union would be unable to participate in the consultations.

40. **Ms. Silot Bravo** (Cuba) said that her delegation agreed with the advice given by the Chairman of the Advisory Committee and felt that if the Committee

were to wait until all the programme budget implications for the matters on the agenda were available it might unduly hold up the work of the Committee.

41. **Mr. Mirmohammad** (Islamic Republic of Iran) recalled the statement made by his delegation on behalf of the Group of 77 and China to the effect that the Committee should consider the programme budget implications of items on which it had to make a decision as and when they were made available by the substantive committees in order not to delay unduly the work of the General Assembly and in order not to put the Fifth Committee under time pressure at a late stage. He therefore believed that the programme budget implications should be considered in a manner consistent with established procedure as the Chairman had proposed and as scheduled in the Committee's work programme. The function of the other substantive committees was to consider programme activities and to refer the programme budget implications to the Fifth Committee. There had been only one instance during the current session in which a substantive committee had considered matters that were properly within the competence of the Fifth Committee. His delegation was grateful to the Secretary-General for drawing attention to that in document A/C.5/56/13, which referred in that connection to General Assembly resolution 45/248 B and to the report of the Advisory Committee (A/54/7).

42. **Mr. Orr** (Canada) said that the comments that had been made were very helpful to the Committee's work. It should be pointed out that, where the work of the General Assembly was delayed because the consideration of programme budget implications was held up, that was generally the result of the slowness of other committees in referring the programme budget implications to the Fifth Committee. His delegation felt that the Committee should review all the programme budget implications in a comprehensive manner in the context of the overall budget, even if that meant waiting until all the programme budget implications were available.

43. **Mr. Albrecht** (South Africa) said that his delegation appreciated the advice of the Chairman of the Advisory Committee but regretted that that advice was not always taken seriously by some groups. He asked how soon the Fifth Committee could expect a consolidated list of activities with programme budget implications from the Secretary-General. He also felt that the statement made by one delegation that it would not participate in informal discussions of programme budget implications until all of them were available set a dangerous precedent. It was for the Fifth Committee to finalize its budget deliberations as soon as possible.

44. **Mr. Tilemans** (Belgium), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said that, contrary to what had just been stated, his delegation took the recommendations and advice of the Chairman of the Advisory Committee very seriously and had taken careful note of what had been said by all delegations. However, the European Union continued to have difficulty with the consideration of programme budget implications before they were all available for discussion.

45. **Mr. Zhou** Qiangwu (China) said that his delegation supported the statement made on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and considered that the discussion on programme budget implications should not be further delayed. Like the delegation of South Africa, his delegation wished to know when the Committee could expect to receive the full set of programme budget implications.

46. **Ms. Silot Bravo** (Cuba) expressed her delegation's concern over the proposal to postpone the study of programme budget implications that were already available to the Committee. That decision was likely to cause a certain instability and lack of predictability in the Committee's work and create problems connected with its consideration of other matters later in the session.

47. **Mr. Sach** (Director of the Programme Planning and Budget Division) said that the date on which the Secretariat would be submitting programme budget implications would depend on the status of work in the other Main Committees and in the plenary Assembly. The Second Committee was currently discussing the United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, the United Nations Institute for Training and Research, science and technology and sustainable development, all of which might have substantive implications. In terms of timing, two items to be discussed in the plenary Assembly, namely Afghanistan and the United Nations Human Rights Verification Mission in Guatemala (MINUGUA), which were due to be taken up in the second, or early in the third, week in December, were probably of greater significance. On that basis it would seem unlikely that a comprehensive set of programme budget implications could be made

available earlier than the middle of the third week of December.

48. **The Chairman** said that, in view of the positions taken by the various delegations on the issue of whether consideration of programme budget implications should be held over until they were all available or whether the Committee should discuss them as and when they became available, he felt that the best course of action would be for the Committee to consider the programme budget implications of the other draft resolutions listed for discussion during the current meeting and for the Bureau to adopt a position on the matter just after the close of the meeting. The outcome of the Bureau's discussions on the issue would be reported to the Committee for a final decision at a meeting the following morning.

Programme budget implications of draft resolution A/C.3/56/L.6/Rev.1, as orally revised: Follow-up to the International Year of Older Persons: Second World Assembly on Ageing (A/C.5/56/15)

49. **Mr. Mselle** (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that, in paragraph 8 of draft resolution A/C.3/56/L.6/Rev.1, as orally revised, the General Assembly would invite the Department of Public Information, in cooperation with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the host country, to continue the information campaign for the Second World Assembly on Ageing, to be held in April 2002. In the statement of programme budget implications (A/C.5/56/15), the Secretary-General proposed an estimate of $195,000, comprising four work-months of general temporary assistance at the P-3 level ($45,000) and the public information activities set out in paragraph 6 of the statement ($150,000).

50. The Advisory Committee had already noted that no resources had been proposed under section 26, Public information, for information activities associated with special meetings and conferences scheduled for 2002-2003 and that additional requirements would be sought through statements of programme budget implications (A/56/7, para. VII.2). Since the amount proposed was small in comparison to the resources available to the Department of Public Information and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, and in view of the importance of publicity for the Second World Assembly on Ageing, the Advisory Committee recommended that the Fifth Committee should inform the General Assembly that, should it adopt the draft resolution, the Secretary-General should be authorized to carry out fully the related public information activities set out in his statement. Such additional appropriation as might be required would be considered by the General Assembly in the context of the first budget performance report for the biennium 2002-2003.

51. **Mr. Tilemans** (Belgium), speaking on behalf of the European Union, referred to the awkward situation in which some committees found themselves and said that some strong doubts had been expressed in the meeting of the Committee that had dealt with the Second World Assembly on Ageing as to whether the activity was or was not a priority and as to what should be done with regard to the publicity campaign connected to it. The intervention of the Secretariat had provided some clarification but there was still some ambiguity, in particular with regard to the interpretation of resolutions 45/248 B and 41/213. There had appeared to be no choice but to accept the activity as such or reject it, without any possibility of giving an opinion on the prioritization of activities. The European Union would consider the programme budget implications of the preparations for the Second World Assembly on Ageing with the necessary rigour.

52. **Mr. Repasch** (United States of America) said that his delegation attached considerable importance to the preparations for the Second World Assembly on Ageing and asked why the amounts in the statement of programme budget implications were not in the proposed budget. That appeared to indicate a lack of transparency in the budget process. He agreed with the Chairman of the Advisory Committee that the amounts involved were relatively small in comparison with the amounts available to the Department of Public Information and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and he therefore believed that the activities should be carried out within the proposed resource allocation. As the representative of Belgium had indicated on behalf of the European Union, it appeared from the statement of programme budget implications that there was a need for the Secretariat to prioritize.

53. **Mr. Yamanaka** (Japan) said that his Government supported the Second World Assembly on Ageing. He noted that the General Assembly at its previous session had adopted resolution 55/58 in which it invited the

Department of Public Information to launch an information campaign for the Second World Assembly on Ageing (para. 6) and welcomed the establishment by the United Nations programme on ageing of the Internet-accessible database on policies and programmes on ageing (para. 7). He noted that, on the basis of that resolution, the Department of Public Information had already undertaken public information activities in connection with the forthcoming World Assembly on Ageing. Some resources were therefore already available and his delegation asked why additional resources were needed for further public information activities.

54. **Mr. Fox** (Australia) noted that, in the statement of the programme budget implications of the draft resolution on the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons provision was made for the absorption of the additional cost being sought, while there was no corresponding provision in the statement of the programme budget implications of preparations for the Second World Assembly on Ageing. He asked the Secretariat what potential there was for absorption of the cost within the Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

55. **Mr. Sach** (Director of the Programme Planning and Budget Division), responding to a question concerning the transparency of the budget process, drew attention to section 26 of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2002-2003 (para. 26.6), which referred to a reduction of $3.1 million compared with the revised appropriation for 2000-2001, which reflected the effect of a discontinuation of the non-recurrent portion of the 2000-2001 appropriation, relating mainly to special conferences. That reduction was due to the fact that there would be no mandate for such conferences in the forthcoming biennium. Paragraph 26.9 stated that the level of resource requirements did not include any provision for the information activities associated with special meetings and conferences to be scheduled for the biennium 2002-2003 and that, should the Department of Public Information be required to carry out promotional and informational activities specific to those meetings and conferences, the necessary requirements would be sought through the presentation of statements of programme budget implications. That was the basis for the statement of the programme budget implications of the Second World Assembly on Ageing (A/C.5/56/15); it related to a very specific mandate contained in paragraph 8 of draft resolution A/C.3/56/L.6/Rev.1, as orally revised, whereby the General Assembly would invite the Department of Public Information to continue, in cooperation with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the host country, the information campaign for the Second World Assembly on Ageing. It was in response to that that the Secretariat had made the proposal for an additional $195,000 for the biennium 2002-2003 so as to be in a position to support the World Assembly on Ageing in matters of public information.

56. With respect to the possibility of the absorption of costs, he said that the proposal in the document had been put forward since the Secretariat saw no possibility of such absorption in advance of the biennium. It had been noted, however, that the Advisory Committee had indicated that the activity should be the subject of an attempt to absorb costs. The Secretariat would therefore report back later in the context of the first performance report and would indicate at that stage to what extent it had been successful in absorbing the costs of the information campaign within existing resources and whether additional appropriations would be required.

57. **Mr. Orr** (Canada) asked why the substantive department did not require additional funding for what was a newly mandated activity while the Department of Public Information did. He also said that his delegation's reading of section 26 of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2002-2003 was that the work of the Department of Public Information involved the preparation of public information products such as press kits, background articles, fact sheets, brochures, the posting of information on the United Nations web site and on the local web sites of United Nations information centres. Most of those activities were part of the everyday work of the Department of Public Information in promoting the goals and purposes of the United Nations and he felt that the Department should cover them within existing resources by prioritizing its work to focus on the forthcoming World Assembly on Ageing.

58. **Mr. Sach** (Director of the Programme Planning and Budget Division) said that the question was really about why the cost of the additional activities could not be absorbed. Broadly speaking, two approaches to budgeting were possible: on the one hand, an appropriation could be made available within which the costs of all activities were to be absorbed or, on the

other, individual mandates could be itemized and priced and indicated as programme budget implications with specific related appropriations. The former approach had been used in connection with conference services and the latter with regard to other activities. If the Secretariat had been using the generalized approach with regard to the Department of Public Information, the $3.1 million, which had been in the resource base of the budget for the 2000-2001 biennium and which related specifically to the support of general conferences would not have been surrendered. It was because of the approach involving itemizing as and when specific conferences required public information support that the Secretariat had been following the process of itemizing them in the programme budget implications and also surrendering related resources as and when those conferences no longer required support.

59. A question had also been asked about the support under section 9 of the proposed programme budget relating to the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. There was a general mandate for the Secretary-General to prepare for the World Assembly on Ageing and on that basis he had been able to make preparations and incorporate the substantive work to be done with regard to the activity within the initial proposals for section 9. That had not been the case with regard to public information, for which a specific mandate was required; that mandate was now provided in draft resolution A/C.3/56/L.6/Rev.1, as orally revised.

60. **Mr. Yamanaka** (Japan) pointed out that paragraph 8 of draft resolution A/C.3/56/L.6/Rev.1, as orally revised, used the same language as paragraph 6 of resolution 55/58 adopted the previous year and said that his delegation did not understand why paragraph 8 of the draft resolution was regarded as producing a new specific mandate.

Programme budget implications of draft resolution A/C.3/56/L.31: Use of mercenaries as a means of violating human rights and impeding the exercise of the right of peoples to self-determination (A/C.5/56/21)

61. **Mr. Mselle** (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that, in paragraph 10 of draft resolution A/C.3/56/L.31, the General Assembly would request the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to convene, before the fifty-ninth session of the Commission on Human Rights, a second expert meeting pursuant to General Assembly resolution 54/151 to continue studying and updating the international legislation and to make recommendations for a clearer legal definition of mercenaries.

62. According to the statement of the programme budget implications (A/C.5/56/21), the cost of implementing that mandate was estimated at $218,300, comprising estimates of $19,600 for general temporary assistance and $44,500 for travel and subsistence expenses for 10 academic experts under section 22, Human rights, and $154,200 for conference services under section 2, General Assembly affairs and conference services. The Advisory Committee recommended that the Fifth Committee should inform the General Assembly that the adoption of the draft resolution would give rise to expenditure not exceeding $64,100 and that additional appropriations would be considered by the General Assembly in accordance with the procedures set out in its resolutions 41/213 and 42/211 for the use and operation of the contingency fund.

Programme budget implications of draft resolution A/C.3/56/L.26: Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (A/C.5/56/16)

63. **Mr. Mselle** (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that, under draft resolution A/C.3/56/L.26, the General Assembly would decide, inter alia, to authorize the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women to hold, on an exceptional basis, an extraordinary session of three weeks' duration in 2002 in order to reduce the backlog of reports, and to enlarge the membership of the pre-sessional working group in 2002 in order to prepare for that session.

64. According to the statement of programme budget implications (A/C.5/56/16), the extraordinary session and the enlargement of the pre-sessional working group would give rise to additional requirements under section 9, Economic and social affairs, of $236,700 for the travel and per diem expenses of the 23 members of the Committee and $16,200 for the per diem expenses of the additional members of the pre-sessional working group. Conference-servicing requirements were estimated, on a full-cost basis, at $3,430,600; however, as the statement indicated, provision had been made

under section 2, General Assembly affairs and conference services, not only for meetings programmed at the time of budget preparation, but also for meetings authorized subsequently, and that, as a result, no additional appropriation would be required under that section.

65. Representatives of the Secretary-General had briefed the Advisory Committee on the backlog of reports submitted by States parties to the Convention and had informed it that the reports often exceeded 100 pages in length, since the volume of documentation which States parties could submit was not limited. While article 20 of the Convention limited to two weeks per year the amount of time in which the Committee could examine those reports, an amendment to that article was pending. Currently, the Committee held two three-week sessions per year in accordance with General Assembly resolution 51/68, whereby the additional meeting time had been approved for an interim period starting in 1997. If the draft resolution was adopted, the Committee's total meeting time in 2002 would be nine weeks.

66. The Advisory Committee felt that the expected elimination of the backlog might be temporary unless the Committee reformed its methods of work, including its reporting procedures, and adopted guidelines on the length of States parties' reports. Such guidelines should limit the length of the reports and streamline their structure and content. The Advisory Committee also recommended that, if additional meeting time proved necessary in the future, the Committee should consider extending its sessions instead of holding additional sessions, since that would result in savings on items such as travel costs. Bearing in mind those comments, the Advisory Committee recommended that the Fifth Committee should inform the General Assembly that, should it adopt draft resolution A/C.3/56/L.26, expenditure not exceeding $252,900 would arise under section 9, Economic and social affairs, of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2002-2003, and that additional appropriations would be considered by the General Assembly in accordance with the procedures set out in its resolutions 41/213 and 42/211 for the use and operation of the contingency fund.

67. **Mr. Repasch** (United States of America) expressed his delegation's appreciation of the comments of the Chairman of the Advisory Committee on the statement of programme budget implications contained in document A/C.5/56/16 and agreed with the Advisory Committee's view that the implementation of the resolution, assuming that the programme budget implications were approved, might not necessarily lead to the elimination of the backlog that was the original reason for the resolution. His delegation agreed with the Advisory Committee that the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women needed first to reform its methods of work, which had created the backlog to begin with; additional meetings using the same methods of work that had produced the backlog would not resolve the issue. His delegation would probably have more to say on the matter in the informal discussions but wished to state for the record that the statement of programme budget implications did not serve its intended purpose.

68. **Mr. Chandra** (India) said that his delegation had taken note of the Advisory Committee's recommendation with respect to the programme budget implications of draft resolution A/C.3/56/L.26. It recognized the importance of the work of the treaty bodies and hoped that the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women would streamline its methods of work so that the need for an extraordinary session would not arise again.

69. The growing tendency of other Main Committees to state their views on budgetary matters was a disconcerting development. The Chairman of the Fifth Committee should bring that issue to the attention of the President of the General Assembly and should reiterate the principle, contained in a number of General Assembly resolutions, that the Fifth Committee was the Main Committee with responsibility for administrative and budgetary matters. Also disturbing was the general tendency within the Fifth Committee to request a given body to undertake additional activities without providing it with appropriate funding, as in the case of the public information activities for the Second World Assembly on Ageing.

Programme budget implications of draft resolution A/56/L.7: Special session of the General Assembly on children (A/C.5/56/18)

70. **Mr. Mselle** (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that, under draft resolution A/56/L.7, the General Assembly would decide to convene a special session on children from 8 to 10 May 2002, the

special session having been postponed from the originally scheduled dates of 19 to 21 September 2001 in the wake of the events of 11 September. According to the statement of the programme budget implications (A/C.5/56/18), the cost of the special session was estimated at $564,100 for conference servicing on the basis of the assumptions outlined in paragraph 3 of the statement, which indicated that the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services would have considerable difficulty in accommodating the special session, owing to the very full calendar of meetings in 2002, and that other mandated bodies scheduled to meet at around the same time would be affected. The Advisory Committee requested that information and explanations concerning the possible additional costs mentioned in paragraph 3 (a) (vii) of the statement should be included in the first performance report for the biennium 2002-2003.

71. Non-conference-servicing costs were estimated at $539,400, including $147,000 under section 26, Public information, the details of which were given in annex I of the statement; $236,200 under section 27D, Office of Central Support Services, the details of which were given in annex II; $20,200 for protocol services, as explained in annex III; and $136,000 for travel of representatives, as explained in paragraph 4 of the statement. The Advisory Committee recommended that the Fifth Committee should inform the General Assembly that the adoption of the draft resolution would give rise to non-conference-servicing costs not exceeding $539,400 under section 1, Overall policy-making, direction and coordination, section 26, Public information, and section 27D, Office of Central Support Services, and that additional appropriations would be considered by the General Assembly in accordance with the procedure set out in its resolutions 41/213 and 42/211 for the use and operation of the contingency fund.

72. **Ms. Silot Bravo** (Cuba), supported by **Mr. Herrera** (Mexico), said that the oral reports introduced by the Chairman of the Advisory Committee during the meeting should be published as official documents for consideration by the Committee.

73. **Mr. Repasch** (United States of America) asked how much of the preparatory work for the special session, which had originally been scheduled for September 2001, had already been completed. He also asked for an explanation of the discrepancy between the two estimates for the rental of cellular telephones given in annex II and annex III.

74. **Mr. Zhou** Qiangwu (China) said that he was concerned about the conference-servicing difficulties mentioned in paragraph 3 (a) (vii) of the Secretary-General's statement (A/C.5/56/18) and asked whether those difficulties would create budgetary problems. He also wished to know the amount of voluntary contributions received for the conduct of the special session.

75. **Mr. Orr** (Canada) said that, while some of the additional requirements listed in the Secretary-General's statement were clearly justified, such as the cost of additional security officers, he failed to understand the need for the many items mentioned in annex II, paragraphs 1 (b), 2 and 3, since the special session was to last only one week. Annex I, paragraph 1 (b), indicated an amount of $10,000 in "seed money" for United Nations information centres; since there were some 50 or 60 such centres, the amount to be allocated to each of them seemed insignificant, and he wondered what they were expected to do with the funds and whether the money would really be spent to help meet the objectives of the special session.

76. **Mr. Sach** (Director of the Programme Planning and Budget Division) said that, as at the current time, the Secretariat did not believe that an additional appropriation for language resources would be needed in connection with the special session, despite the strains on the Organization's conference-servicing capacity. However, the need for additional capacity in other areas was real, particularly with respect to security. The items listed in annex II, paragraphs 1 (b) and 2 (d), were for the use of security personnel. He would provide details at a later date with respect to the two estimates given for the rental of cellular telephones.

77. The estimate of $147,000 for public information included $106,000 for coverage of the special session and $41,000 for promotional activities; the latter amount had been computed taking into account the work already undertaken and the support provided by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) for activities in that area. UNICEF had received between $1.1 and $1.6 million in voluntary contributions, but those funds were not available to cover the needs in the areas of public information, central support services and protocol mentioned in the Secretary-General's

statement. The pattern of resources being sought was based on recent experience with other high-profile events such as the Millennium Assembly.

78. **The Chairman** said that the Bureau would meet to discuss the procedure for considering statements of programme budget implications and would inform the Committee of its conclusions the following day.

79. **Mr. Mirmohammad** (Islamic Republic of Iran), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the Committee had already begun to consider programme budget implications in its informal consultations and that all statements of programme budget implications should receive the same treatment in the Committee.

The meeting rose at 12.35 p.m.